

First Steps Family Survey

Statewide Summary

Spring 2007

Total surveys mailed out: 2489

Number of surveys returned: 760

1. How old is your child?				
75 (9.87%)	225 (29.61%)	394 (51.84%)	63 (8.29%)	3 (0.39%)
Less than one year	1 yr - less than 2 yrs	2 yrs - less than 3 yrs	3 years and over	Did not answer
2. At what age did your child first begin receiving First Steps services?				
405 (53.29%)	202 (26.58%)	141 (18.55%)	0 (0.00%)	12 (1.58%)
Less than one year	1 yr - less than 2 yrs	2 yrs - less than 3 yrs	3 years and over	Did not answer
4. It was easy to learn about First Steps.				
289 (38.48%)	389 (51.80%)	56 (7.46%)	17 (2.26%)	3
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
5. It was easy to find out if my child was eligible for services.				
307 (40.45%)	378 (49.80%)	59 (7.77%)	15 (1.98%)	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
6. It was easy to obtain the services that are needed for my child and family.				
294 (38.99%)	353 (46.82%)	74 (9.81%)	33 (4.38%)	2
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
7. No unnecessary services were included in the IFSP.				
368 (50.07%)	357 (48.57%)	5 (0.68%)	5 (0.68%)	18
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
8. When my child was evaluated, all concerns about my child's development raised by me and others were addressed.				
431 (57.01%)	298 (39.42%)	19 (2.51%)	8 (1.06%)	2
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
9. The results of my child's assessments or evaluations were explained to me in ways I understood.				
421 (55.61%)	313 (41.35%)	13 (1.72%)	10 (1.32%)	2
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
10. I received information and explanations about our family's rights to file a child complaint.				
341 (46.91%)	323 (44.43%)	46 (6.33%)	17 (2.34%)	28
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
11. I received information and explanations about our family's procedural safeguards.				
333 (45.31%)	347 (47.21%)	46 (6.26%)	9 (1.22%)	16
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
12. I feel the service coordinator listens to me and encourages my opinions.				
455 (60.26%)	259 (34.30%)	29 (3.84%)	12 (1.59%)	3
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
13. Our service coordinator helps my family get the services we need in a timely manner.				
441 (58.72%)	247 (32.89%)	34 (4.53%)	29 (3.86%)	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
14. In creating our Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), I am asked about areas where our family feels things are fine and where we feel we need help.				
450 (60.00%)	283 (37.73%)	14 (1.87%)	3 (0.40%)	7
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
15. We receive all the services listed in our Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).				
423 (56.25%)	289 (38.43%)	29 (3.86%)	11 (1.46%)	8
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

16. All the services I felt necessary were included in the IFSP.

404 (53.79%)	308 (41.01%)	31 (4.13%)	8 (1.07%)	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

17. First Steps service providers were effective and knowledgeable in working with my child's disability.

427 (56.86%)	284 (37.82%)	30 (3.99%)	10 (1.33%)	8
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

18. I feel the First Steps service providers listen to me and respect my opinions.

455 (60.11%)	280 (36.99%)	19 (2.51%)	3 (0.40%)	3
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

19. First Steps services give my family the tools to directly improve my child's development.

441 (58.88%)	282 (37.65%)	21 (2.80%)	5 (0.67%)	8
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

20. The services included in the IFSP were explained so that I understood them.

421 (55.84%)	327 (43.37%)	3 (0.40%)	3 (0.40%)	4
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

21. I believe the services my child and family receive are appropriate and necessary.

473 (62.73%)	261 (34.62%)	17 (2.25%)	3 (0.40%)	2
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

22. Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meetings are scheduled at a time and place that are convenient for me and my family.

480 (64.09%)	254 (33.91%)	10 (1.34%)	5 (0.67%)	8
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

23. Over the past year, First Steps services have helped me and/or my family:

a. To participate in everyday routines even though we have a child with special needs.

341 (52.46%)	287 (44.15%)	20 (3.08%)	2 (0.31%)	94
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

b. Feel more confident in my skills as a parent/guardian.

363 (51.49%)	312 (44.26%)	26 (3.69%)	4 (0.57%)	39
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

c. Understand my child's needs.

400 (54.35%)	317 (43.07%)	14 (1.90%)	5 (0.68%)	18
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

d. Be more optimistic about my child's future.

413 (56.97%)	291 (40.14%)	16 (2.21%)	5 (0.69%)	25
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

24. Since being part of First Steps, I can work with professionals.

346 (51.49%)	304 (45.24%)	18 (2.68%)	4 (0.60%)	70
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

25. Since being part of First Steps, I know how to advocate for what my child needs.

356 (50.42%)	314 (44.48%)	30 (4.25%)	6 (0.85%)	38
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

26. Our family is better off because of the First Steps program.

478 (64.68%)	227 (30.72%)	29 (3.92%)	5 (0.68%)	13
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

27. Our child is better off because of the First Steps program.

528 (70.97%)	193 (25.94%)	17 (2.28%)	6 (0.81%)	8
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

28. Approximately how often does your family use the help of your service coordinator?

162 (21.92%)	61 (8.25%)	262 (35.45%)	230 (31.12%)	24 (3.25%)
Weekly	Bi-Weekly	Monthly	Every six months	Annually

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Note: Comments are typed as written on the surveys with the exception of the correction of most misspellings. Names and other personally identifiable information of children and families have been redacted.

I wish that First Steps would work with child beyond the age of three.

When we first started the First Steps program, we were greatly disappointed that our service coordinator would not return our telephone calls and we could not make telephone calls to get anything done. We later switched due to system changes and with our last service coordinator we were able to get great service. Another problem that exists is the fact that we have one speech therapist in our county that does First Steps. This makes it difficult for future families because the hospital she works for is no longer taking new First Steps children. I worry that other children in need of therapy will not be able to get the services they need due to lack of therapists who currently work with the First Steps program. Overall, I want to say that this is a great program and my child will be able to have a better "jump start" due to early intervention.

Our therapist was great.

Our coordinator is fantastic, as well as our therapists.

My daughter's therapists were fabulous to work with.

We need more speech helpers at night that can be more consistent.

My Special Instruction person is really good with my son and I enjoy the way that she is with my son.

The service coordinator was very rigid and did not always acknowledge the importance of the therapist's opinions at meetings.

There is a good balance between my occupational therapist and physical therapist. They have been flexible in working with our schedules. They give us continuous feedback and ideas to adjust our home environment to make it more therapeutic for our son. I feel every bit at ease asking them questions and getting the answers or suggestions I/we need.

I am so pleased to be enrolled in First Steps. My son has been doing so well with the help of therapists. We are very blessed for all the help. Thank you all so very much.

I have only spoken to our service coordinator one time as she is new. She was starting when we started. I did really appreciate that she took the time to show up at my son's IEP meeting at Blue Ridge Elementary on such very short notice.

First Steps has been wonderful for my family. They care about us!

To Whom It May Concern: 1. Need to include services for Cochlear Implants. It makes no sense that audiologic and speech therapy is covered for hearing aids, but not when related to a cochlear implant. All hearing impaired children need audiological and speech services. They are "cured" because of the implant. The only medical part of the Cochlear Implant is the surgery. Beyond the surgery, it is a piece of hearing equipment. My daughter only gets speech two times a week because she had a Cochlear Implant. Another hearing impaired child gets three times a week because they have hearing aids. Does that make sense? 2. It makes no sense that a therapist may not evaluate and treat. Once a feel for the child has been attained and rapport has been set with the parents and child, why would you take that away to start fresh with someone else? Therapists, by nature, want what is best for the child. 3. Other than these two aspects, my husband and I have been happy with the First Steps system. At times the rules are frustrating and stupid, but, overall, we are thankful for all of the services provided. Thank you.

At first, the therapist would be at our home an hour, but after a few weeks, the time was shortened by fifteen minutes or more as they would arrive late.

Our service coordinator for our son is a very knowledgeable and caring person. Not only has she helped us with our youngest child, she has also helped us obtain helpful information for our older child as well. She has gone above and beyond the means of her job. First Steps should be proud to have such a wonderful and professional person on their staff. She is not only a great asset to First Steps, but also to my family. I cannot begin to thank her for everything she has done for my family. Thank you.

The physical therapist we have is very friendly and knowledgeable. My girl's love her. They don't realize what she is doing is therapy and they think it's playtime. They have done well on their own, but since having physical therapy, they have really accelerated in their development. Thank you for providing these services to my family.

Our family uses the help of our service coordinator whenever needed. I hope that whenever families come forward looking for help for their children and they don't qualify that First Steps will still help them to find the help they need. We were very fortunate to receive services through First Steps for our son. Wow! He has really thrived. I wouldn't have known about this program if it weren't for PAT.

How do you evaluate the providers? We, as parents, get to know our child's providers very well. I think we should participate in their evaluation process or at least to have the chance to give our opinions. Thank you very much.

My parent educator told me about First Steps. I think physicians need to be more aware of the program and trained to identify developmental delays early. Without our parent educator, my daughter would not have gotten help for another six months (most pediatricians I know tend to flag problems at eighteen months). We've been very happy with First Steps. It has helped us a lot. One thing that has been difficult and I'm not sure if this is a role for First Steps or not~understanding all therapy options. In Kansas City, there are some private agencies that provide therapies and they will supplement First Steps. Families with children in First Steps could use information on all medical and therapy services that are in the area.

There are services that are difficult to obtain such as O & N. First Steps needs to recruit more therapists. Speech therapists are especially difficult to find. There also needs to be more recruitment of NDT therapists to work with kids in with Cerebral Palsy. I am also strongly opposed to any changes that would make First Steps more consultative and less hands on therapy. As a former therapist that is now a stay at home mom with a special needs child, I can tell you that most parents cannot do it all. My son was so sick and I had so much medical care to provide to him that I could not focus on all the therapy by myself when he was little-and I'm a trained therapist-heaven help someone who knows nothing about therapy. So many of these kids are so involved that they need direct services and follow-through at home. Good direct services involves home programming as well.

Our service coordinator is 100% amazing. She is a warm-hearted and a wonderful woman/friend. She has helped our family understand our daughter's hearing loss. She explains our daughter's situation in an understandable way. We always have a clear understanding of our daughter's future needs. I would be so grateful to continue to have her always be a teacher for us even after our one-year-old daughter hits the age limit of three years. She never complains of the time or location that is convenient for my husband and I to meet her. She also investigated our health insurance with me. She goes above and beyond her "duties" to help families. I'm happy we have her.

Tia Schultz has been so helpful to us. We just can't say enough about our entire team. Thank you!

One complaint I have regarding the First Steps program is that we seem to explain problems of our child and answer the same questions to several people during the initial process. During our first meeting we went over a lengthy question/answer process and then when our caseworker, who comes to the house monthly, first came, she had none of the information and we had to do it all over again.

Everyone has been so nice to us and so helpful. Thanks for everything. My child has benefited from this and we can all tell. She is really good at keeping me updated on what services we need. Thanks again.

The lady who was doing our First Steps was supposed to call me back with a date and time that someone would be here to evaluate my child. She never called. She was very hard to get hold of. I found out through Parents As Teachers that First Steps felt that they could not help my child. I thought that it was First Steps job to call me and let me know what was going on?

Once we got a service coordinator that did her job, she was understanding and great. The First Steps therapists are great, understanding and very helpful. They are great with my son and worked around our schedule. They were courteous. The First Steps program has helped my son a lot. He has come so far since he's had the services. They do a great job. But, they need more speech therapists in the Jefferson County area. Thank you.

Just a note to express my gratitude and appreciation to all First Steps providers for all the help, assistance and understanding I have received. Muchas Gracias

Written instruction/reports after each session would be extremely helpful in monitoring with my child between sessions.

First Steps helped us figure out our son has Autism. Some family members thought he might be and never mentioned it to us. Therapists pointed us in the right direction. I am so grateful, because now our son has a chance at early intervention.

Saline county needs to have more than one physical therapist to have instead of one. Our daughter does not feel comfortable with Paul Chong. Our daughter needs someone else that she feels more comfortable with. My spouse and I would prefer a female. After our daughter's survey for both eyes on May 17th, we will then think about staying in First Steps or completely dropping out! Our daughter at this time has very serious eye problems. We were not happy with having Paul Chong in our home, or his attitude on how to raise our daughter. Paul Chong makes comments, "we know who runs this household". He's referring to our daughter. He is very, very unprofessional.

I have always been extremely pleased with our service counselor and therapists since the beginning. She looks out solely for my daughter and her best interest. She is a wonderful and caring person that takes her time to ensure everything is done right.

I know it is not your problem but my son still does not have his wheelchair and that's a great big complaint of mine.

My son is required two hours of therapy, but they can't find anyone to do two hours, so he only gets one hour a week.

Would like to see more coordinator skills exercise expertise.

I don't have any concerns he's doing good. His doctors appointments have been going great.

The initial meeting in February was very tough. Our service coordinator was late, didn't bring a pen and forgot some of her paperwork. We assumed she was new in her position and let it go. She then informed us that the IFSP would need to be done within 45 days of the initial appointment. She called two days before it was due to set up the IFSP meeting. My husband could not attend that meeting due to being out of town. For the actual IFSP meeting, she was late again (20-30 minutes). She then said she'd email me the completed IFSP by the weekend. She did not and it was approximately another week before we received it. She had one excuse or another. Overall, my experience with her was not the best. Although she was very nice, she just seemed unorganized. As for the therapists we are using - AMAZING! They were, by far, the most beneficial to my child. The speech and occupational therapists are wonderful and gives us great tips. Finally, our developmental therapist. She is not very knowledgeable and I think she is fairly new in her job. We feel "we", the parents, are leading the therapy sessions. Most likely, we'll discontinue her services. In summary, First Steps is a wonderful program. We are truly blessed to have encountered our therapists. Our son has improved verbally and socially because of these two women.

This was our first experience with First Steps. We are a foster family with fraternal twins. We are very pleased with the children's progress since the beginning. I would use the service again should my pediatrician recommend it. Not only have the children benefited from this but my husband and myself are better educated about handling children with disabilities. We highly commend you for your services and have shared our positive experiences with many people. Again, thank you. You have been vital in the lives of our children whom we love so much and want the best for their future! Sincerely

First Steps helped our daughter greatly. She receives occupational, physical, developmental and speech all through First Steps. She is now walking, saying a couple of words and interacting more appropriately. We believe all her progress would not have been possible without First Steps.

Our child was eligible for First Steps from birth, but we were not aware of that and neither was any of his many doctors. This program has changed our lives and our son is improving greatly with the help of therapy that we could not afford even with good health insurance. Wish we were all more aware of the program from the beginning.

Our service coordinator is incredible. He has been a huge part of our First Steps experience. Our providers are great as well. We feel that we have received services that have enhanced the quality of our lives.

You are doing a great job with my daughter but what will happen when she turns three? She still needs more help with speech.

The therapists have been doing a wonderful job. Our service coordinator is also very helpful and professional. One thing that could be improved is the frequency of therapy. Our child could and would benefit from more therapy session per week.

It was difficult to get my child in the First Steps program. Our pediatrician referred us in May 2006 and we were told at that time by First Steps how difficult it is to get your child in the program and that he probably didn't need it. They also went on to say they believe pediatricians are too quick to refer the First Steps program. In hindsight, I realize I should have been more persistent and that unless "M.D." follows their name, they have no right to deny my son the services needed. We also had a service coordinator who was very difficult to work with. She did not want to give my son services that were recommended by medical professionals. However, most of the providers we worked with were okay. Most of the time we feel like our "therapy" sessions were simply play dates. The most valuable provider was our occupational therapist. She implemented some programs that we can use and she did more than just come play for an hour.

First Steps has been wonderful for all of us! Don't know where my daughter would be without them!

Our child is not a special needs child but was developmentally behind in gross motor skills. Although we only needed First Steps for a short time, we were so impressed with their services and how quickly our child caught up. It was valuable to us as parents.

We have really appreciated the services provided through First Steps for the most part. We have been disappointed in the poor turnout for providers. We have been without an occupational therapist for almost six months now! No occupational therapists are in our area. We have a conflict with the physical therapist's schedule on one of her two days and yet there are no additional providers available, so the area my son needs the most is lacking due to availability and we are now having to seek outside help out of our own pocket. Our service coordinator has been great to work with us.

We were devastated when we thought First Steps was going to be cut. Our family income is too high for our son to qualify for state aid but it would be impossible to afford therapy on our own. This program is vital to parents with special needs children. To learn about one's special needs child while at the same time working/managing the family would prohibit the access to services we received. Thank you.

Our coordinator always listens, is encouraging and respects my opinion regarding my child's needs. So far, I have nothing but praise to offer the therapists for my daughter. They are truly interested in all the best for my daughter. She not only promotes her regarding physical therapy but is genuinely interested in her all around well being. Our occupational therapists is equally fabulous. Sincerely

We've just started the program so it's hard to answer some of these questions. I've seen some improvements, but have yet to reach our goals as of yet.

This program has been a great blessing to me, my child and my family. I have had excellent service from the therapists to my service coordinator. This experience, though tedious, with its up and downs has always been helpful, respectful, professional, knowledgeable and a great help. Although I have had a few not-so-great therapists, but the number is as small as two to three over the course of almost three years. Thanks First Steps. I would be happy to speak on behalf of the program to other parents that may be apprehensive, need a better understanding of what the program offers and its long lasting value to a special needs child's life. It has enriched me tremendously and given me hope that my son is on his way to developing to the fullest of his potential.

Our coordinator and therapists have been wonderful! We are very grateful for First Steps.

It's great.

We are impressed with all of the therapists First Steps uses including those that originally evaluated my child. Thank you.

The reason I said we "disagree" on questions #5 and #6 was that our child was borderline at first to qualify for services and we had to go through a period of determination to see how her diagnosis would fall and it ended up being in our daughter's favor.

I disagreed with #6 because we cannot find a physical therapist that will travel to our town. We live an hour from Kansas City, and that is where the closest physical therapist is. We need a PT around our area.

This survey isn't really representative of us or our coordinator. We are on a consult basis currently and we have not needed or received any support because so far delays have not manifested.

Our child really needed a speech therapist, but hasn't had any luck finding one in the Phelps county area. Therefore, she hasn't gotten any speech therapy for about fifteen months now. And now, she's almost not eligible for First Steps therapy anymore.

We have only been participating in First Steps for two months so I have only been in contact with our service coordinator two or three times. Our coordinator has since left the program and at this time we do not have a service coordinator. Every aspect of the program has been very positive and everyone has been very helpful and respectful of our needs and concerns. Thank you for all that First Steps offers.

We really like (LOVE) our daughter's therapist's.

They are all great! Our daughter would not be doing as well as she is without them! Her diagnosis is Down Syndrome.

Thanks to our service coordinator, our experience with the First Steps program has been nothing but extremely positive. The therapist's intervention has been a tremendous success. Addressing my daughter's needs early has nearly caught her up to speed with her peers. I'm grateful for this program and a huge supporter of it. Thank you.

First Steps has had no impact on my ability to advocate. I could already.

Currently, we have not used any services provided by First Steps. However, our service coordinator has been very good about contacting us regarding our needs.

Due to shortage of physical therapists and physical therapy aides, we didn't always get the amount of service time in the IFSP. We thank the taxpayers who make these services possible in an attempt to give our child the best start in life.

The First Steps program has been wonderful. I'm not sure what our family would have done without it. Thank you.

To anyone who is going to read this,

My personal experiences are not the best. We are not getting all the programs we need and not all the services have been provided. We need a speech therapist to come to the home. You have said you are looking for one, but nothing. You do have someone who will come to the house but not a speech therapist. I still don't understand my child's wants and needs. My child is no better from when we started from. Our First Steps coordinator does say she is trying and I think she is. We need more help. Thank you for your time.

Both our therapists were very helpful and attentive and do a great job!

First Steps is an incredible program. Our service coordinator is exceptional. Not only is she extremely knowledgeable, but she is also extremely caring and compassionate. For the most part, the service providers have been good, although we have had a few poor providers, but we easily switched within First Steps with the support of our service coordinator. Our complaint with the program is the evaluation process. A thirty to sixty minute visit with an evaluator is simply not enough. The write-ups were written in technical terms and were not explained to us. We saw different persons so often during this process - there was no continuity nor stability. The evaluations did not give us tools, rather, the interaction with the service providers is what gave us the tools. Had it not been for our service coordinator, we would not have known what to expect from the service providers given the evaluations. The service coordinator is the best aspect of the program. What an incredible help.

My service coordinator was extremely efficient, helpful, objective, and empathetic. She is a professional that helped me find the best services for my child. I am pleased with my child's progress and feel that our service coordinator is largely responsible for that.

There are some high quality service coordinators and therapists working for First Steps but also many that are not as skilled. Due to my personal experience in special education I feel I am able to distinguish between the two but I don't feel First Steps has enough supervision or quality checks built in to see what case managers and therapists are doing day to day in order to ensure that families who do not know how to advocate for themselves are receiving quality care. I feel for families who do not get quality therapists and do not know they don't have quality therapists.

First Steps has been the single most important contributor to the growth of our twins, who were born prematurely at twenty-five weeks gestation. The obstacles they have faced seemed almost impossible - and yet now, at the age of two, they are walking, talking and continuing to bridge their developmental gap. The progress they have made amazes us daily! We cannot say enough about First Steps, our therapists or our service coordinator. This program really makes such a big difference in the lives of our children.

We have been thrilled with the program.

My child has swallowing difficulties. It was difficult to find a therapist trained in swallow therapy in Lincoln County. Six months of looking and we finally found a great one. The therapists are great for encouraging our family with our son. The doctors say nothing or just negative things. I don't know where we would be without the positive influence of our therapists!

Some statements I would have indicated between agree and disagree - perhaps a 'somewhat agree'. We've had limited experience with First Steps so it's a bit early to evaluate fully. The people we've worked with have been positive and committed to an effective outcome with our child. An occupational therapist at Children's Mercy was the one that suggested we explore the program, otherwise, I wouldn't have known about it. We look forward to continuing with the program. Thanks.

I wish First Steps services were available to age 5.

This is a very important service for families with children who have health problems. Everyone we've worked with has been friendly, knowledgeable, and professional.

Regarding my involvement with First Steps, my husband and I are able to work with professionals and are able to advocate for what our daughter needs. Being a part of First Steps helped to identify specific needs our daughter may have. The success of First Steps is dependent on each service provider and also the service coordinator. We have been blessed with an excellent physical therapist and a terrific service coordinator.

My service coordinator does not return calls when I need help. My provider is wonderful and a great professional that I appreciate. She does what my service coordinator is supposed to do.

I would like for my daughter to receive physical therapy and an evaluation. You have yet to return my call and I left my number.

Our need doesn't involve a severe problem, but without First Steps, it could have become one. It's nice to know they are there and take my concerns seriously. Since starting our son's therapy, he has blossomed and changed so much. Everything has been so positive.

I don't know what I'd do without Missouri First Steps. It has greatly helped us. We have two children who have benefited from it-one who has graduated and one who is currently in the program. Both have made wonderful progress thanks to the care, knowledge and support of our service provider as well as our therapists that come in our home. They are all friendly, encouraging and delightful to work with and the services are wonderful, convenient and affordable. Thanks so much Missouri First Steps.

We are one of apparently several families out here in Cooper county affected by a lack of providers in this area. This has been quite frustrating. I am very happy with our service coordinator and two of our therapists. One, on the other hand, had to leave during the year. I liked her too and the services and therapy she gave to my daughter. There is one therapist I have difficulty communicating with regarding therapies and goals for my daughter, but there are no other choices or that type of therapist out here.

My service provider has gone above and beyond helping my son. Our providers have all helped me and my son tremendously. Our lives are changed because of these four people and we have only been in First Steps a very short time.

First Steps is wonderful! My six-year-old would not be where he is today without First Steps. Now we are down that road again with our eighteen-month-old. Thanks for all the great work.

We love our speech therapist, however, we do not feel as though our physical therapist has been very helpful. She is very quite and does not give instruction.

First Steps is a great program that has helped my child tremendously.

I honestly do not have enough positive things to say about our service coordinator. He has been such a tremendous help to our family and son. I have been so grateful for the First Steps program. It was thanks to our speech/language pathologist that we got our son started on the services he needed. I have seen much improvement since starting this program. Sincerely, A Grateful Mom

First Steps has been wonderful for our son and our family. The therapists are wonderful. They have helped us tremendously. This is a very important program. Thanks.

We need help in New Madrid counties. There is no one coming to the houses of the special needs children and they need to help more getting someone to the houses because not everyone can miss work and might not have a way to get to the help that they need. They would just have to go without help because no one comes to the houses to teach them what they can do to help the children with special needs. I know a few families that really could use this, but no one is available in this area. This should be one of the largest concerns.

It was very difficult to get qualified, even with a pediatrician's recommendation. I was forced to pay for private evaluations and pay for physical therapy outside of First Steps services. Providers were often late and even brought their children with them. I was inundated with repetitive paperwork between sessions that very seldom had any impact on treatment. There was no communication between therapists.

Invaluable service. Thank you.

I initiated the need for assistance.

I am very disappointed in the length of time it took to get my twin girls speech therapy. The first time through the process they did not qualify (by 2 months). After waiting three months and going through the testing process again, they qualified. They were first tested in August and then again in April. Eight months of therapy was wasted. I am a LD teacher so I am familiar with the process. I had to be a true advocate for my girls and it was still a battle to get them into therapy. I believe First Steps is a proactive approach to school-age children. I do not agree with 50% delay in both rec and exp language skills for children to qualify for speech therapy through First Steps. It is my understanding that Missouri is among the most difficult First Steps programs to qualify compared to other states...why?

I feel very lucky to have found First Steps. My son has come so far in a year. These therapists have become very important figures in my son's life. They are so competent but, most of all, caring. We were blessed with the best of the best. I will always praise and recommend First Steps to anyone.

My family coordinator was wonderful. She went out of her way to help my family in more areas than one! Thanks.

When we first tried to access First Steps services, we lived in Jackson County and it took forever to get her qualified and several weeks before we saw any service providers. When we moved to Clay county in November 06, we saw a dramatic improvement in program quality. Our service coordinator and our providers are wonderful. Another provider was also very helpful in getting a billing issue resolved. I can't say enough good things about our experience and therapists in Clay County. Thanks

The only complaint I have is that at the beginning, I had a very hard time getting my child evaluated. The person that screens that call was not very helpful. I had to call several times to "beg" and "plead" to please have my child evaluated. I even had to get my PAT coordinator involved. Once I got the green light to evaluate my child then the process was fast and evaluators were very good and helpful. Once the services started I could immediately see a difference in my son and I, as a parent, was also more confident. My area coordinator is great. She encouraged and gave me all the necessary information and tools I need. Now that my son is enrolled in an early childhood center. I keep in contact with her as she is interested in my child's progress. I am very grateful to First Steps as I would of not been able to get my son to where he is now. Early intervention has been great and I am now seeing the results.

I just want to say that First Steps was so great. I don't know what I would have done without their services. We are finished because our son is three-and-a-half now. But, I will always be grateful and recommend them to everyone know with young children having problems.

Very professional and helpful. Conveys caring and understanding.

I initiated need of assistance.

We haven't been the program long enough to access questions 26 and 28.

My husband is concerned that the level of care for our physical therapy has changed since we have started with First Steps instead of using the hospital-style PT. We feel that it would be helpful to our son to be able to have therapy at the Early Childhood Center where equipment is available in his size.

Each professional adds extra support and knowledge that my child needs.

Billing is a serious problem. I have been billed at their leisure and double billed, and back billed. Your state run program has a billing department in Kansas!? I believe our governor is doing all he can to eliminate or complicate things with First Steps, since he failed to cut funding.

All the workers was 150% at all times. They showed me how to do the therapy for my child. They were all very gentle and patient while they worked with my child and they know what and how to do the therapy to help the child. I was very pleased with the last three therapists that came to my home.

Our coordinator changed at least four times, some with no notice. We are educated, college professionals who actually pay some for the services. I cannot imagine how hard this system would be for someone, without the education to manage this system of constant change.

We had an excellent speech therapist. I have seen great improvement in my child's speech. I do wish that she could continue servicing my son after he turns three years old. Maybe an extension of this program would be most helpful. Thank you.

Although I feel as if my child has very competent service providers, we need to find a way to "make up" for missed therapy sessions. Two of my child's providers see to it that they follow the "time" guidelines very carefully, however, a third one frequently cancels sessions due to personal needs and is unable to reschedule these missed sessions. Perhaps explaining to families how to have missed sessions "made up" would be beneficial at the IFSP meetings?

I can say with confidence that we had a very positive experience. I know how to be the best parent I can be for my kids. I was taught the skills I need and given a wealth of information. My son's future is no doubt 100% more enriched. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. To be completely helpless to entirely empowered for my son- my beating heart - is incredible. There truly are no words for the gratitude I feel. My service coordinator, was unbelievable. She was very easy to talk to and addressed my concerns and needs more than 100%. Many blessings to you.

The paperwork is incredible. Find a way to cut down on the paperwork.

My child was introduced to First Steps in the NICU at St. John's Hospital. It has been a real benefit to our family.

Without this program I don't know where our family would be. Their support is greatly needed and should be extended to everyone who needs it.

Thank God and the State of Missouri for First Steps! I finally feel like my child is being cared for in the way he deserves since our move here.

We will miss everyone a lot when our daughter turns three. Thanks for all your help.

We have only been provided service for the past month, but we are very satisfied so far and look forward to continued therapy services and, hopefully, results in our child's delays. Thank you!

My service coordinator was consistently looking for ways to decrease services. My child went without services because she did not adequately explain to me your procedures. He is currently without services and was not given the option of continuing services until the school year.

I have been a practicing occupational therapist working with adults for seven years. Then our daughter was unexpectedly born with disabilities. Our daughter has Severe Developmental Delay and Mental Retardation. I truly feel that my husband and I have had to fight every step of the way to get the services my daughter needs, despite physicians input. For the most part I have nothing but wonderful things to say about our individual providers, physical, occupational, speech, and special instruction therapists. But, getting appropriate services approved is one hassle after another. As a family of four, with two working parents, I can personally attest that recent changes with First Steps have made getting services for a middle income family a pure hardship. Like I've said prior, the services we are receiving have been wonderful and have helped us to help our daughter. But, I feel that services wouldn't have been approved without our persistence.

All of the First Step providers are extremely friendly and easy to talk to. They are always open to my opinions and feelings about our child's needs. I feel blessed to have each one of them be a part of our child's life.

Without the aid of the First Steps program we would not be able to provide all of the necessary care that our child requires.

I found that learning about First Steps was a challenge. When I made the initial call, I was discouraged from the beginning. The lady continued to tell me that since the program was cut back (due to Gov. Blunt), your child has to have more than a 50% delay. The questions that were asked on the phone (at first), seemed to not qualify with her. I asked to speak with someone else who was amazing. She gave me the support and was willing to come out and evaluate my son even though there may be a slight chance he may qualify through First Steps. Trying to understand whether your child qualifies or not is confusing. After the evaluations - the meeting to determine if you get services, it is hard to understand from a standpoint of the vocabulary that is used and to understand a "diet program". I also feel that it is not fair that whoever does the initial evaluation(s), they cannot continue past that point if you do qualify, let alone, using anyone from their agency. A particular agency did the occupational and speech evaluation for my son. Because they were affiliated with that agency, no one could be used from there. Why should that be a problem? Once you overcome the hurdles above, the program is wonderful with amazing results. All of the therapists are wonderful and special thanks to our service coordinator who was supportive and helpful.

First Steps is an amazing program. Early Intervention is crucial to our children with special needs. I am a volunteer for the Down Syndrome Association of Greater St. Louis. As a new parent support person and a public speaker to increase awareness, I am also a physician. I make sure everyone I speak to is aware of First Steps. I am always surprised that people are not aware of First Steps or the services provided as a doctor. I did not know either until a few months after our child was born. It is amazing and sad to me that hospitals aren't giving out this information when a child with special needs is born. It is also sad that even some parents who receive First Steps do not realize the importance of utilizing what they learn in therapy throughout the week. My greatest concern is that because of the shortage of therapists, especially occupational and physical therapists, many families do not receive either! As you know, insurance will not always cover these services either. Additionally, music and oral motor therapy are invaluable and should also be offered. Thank you. Dr. Julia Pewitt Kinder 573-651-8925

My child was a 25 weeker. My child's NICU nurses, doctors and pediatricians all say how he doesn't look like a premie. Thanks to our physical therapist, he has a round, perfect head and is developing on time and in some areas, he is above his age. We love our physical therapists. She has become part of our family. My child was grunting words, but now, since his speech therapy, he is talking and saying new words daily. Everyone in First Steps that is taking part in my child's development is wonderful and truly cares about his development.

Our service coordinator is terrific and very professional. She always answers the phone calls promptly and provides helpful answers to questions. We know we are very lucky to have her assisting in our family's needs. I can't say enough good things about our speech therapist. She has helped me be more positive about our situation and has provided us with the tools necessary to further our daughter's speech and language. This experience has been much better than our previous experience with our five-year-old son and I believe it's strongly due to these individuals.

The process seems to take a long time to complete to receive services. For example, on December 27, 2006 at my daughter's IFSP meeting, I asked for a speech evaluation and it was completed on February 24, 2007 and my daughter finally began receiving speech services on June 6, 2007. This is very frustrating. My service coordinator is through the Department of Mental Health because my child's diagnosis is Down Syndrome.

First Steps has provided financial support for the therapy that my child needs but look at the ability to appropriately evaluate or provide therapy to my child. All evaluators directed their attention to us, the parents and never directly tried to interact with our son. Our son recently began therapy at the ABC&D Autism Center. We were informed that the State of Missouri First Steps Program had sent an inspector to ABC&D to evaluate the school. This individual was not educated in early childhood development or Autism and recommended that funding to students at the school be stopped. This is a perfect example of how incompetent the First Steps program has shown itself to be during our interaction with the program. I answered questions 26 & 27 as "Strongly Agree" only because of the financial assistance provided that is the only worthwhile portion of First Steps.

It would have been nice to know about transportation reimbursement for the beginning and to include instructions on how to fill out the form when it was mailed (instead of having to call).

First Steps is an amazing network of people who ensure every success possible for children with special needs. Without this critical program, I am sure I would feel alone and lack the necessary skills and support to guide my child. My daughter will be ready to go to school on time and ready to learn because First Steps has helped her defeat any potential developmental delays that could have resulted from her visual impairment. Thank you Chris Elwood, First Steps and Governor Matt Blunt!

I really like his therapist. When I don't understand something he is doing, she helps me. If I have concerns, she always makes sure to check into them. She lets me know what things to work on with him to give him the best start for his future and lets me know if he has improved. Thank you.

I have absolutely nothing bad to say about the First Steps program. Our service coordinator is terrific. Our service providers are equally wonderful. We've learned so much, just easy things to do on a daily basis, that will help our baby in the long run. We are thrilled to be a part of this program.

Please prevent the current administration from further cuts or changes or parental fees for First Steps. Please provide this level and type of care to future families.

I am extremely grateful for the First Steps program. My child was given a diagnosis that was very hard to deal with in the beginning, but everyone on our team has helped her progress so much in just six months. I feel that her future is very promising now and First Steps has paved a way for that. Our service coordinator has gone above and beyond our expectations. We are happy to have such a caring and supportive person working with us. She has been awesome.

First Steps has helped me, as a parent, achieve goals to improve my child's developmental delays. I know my son is going to do well in life, thanks to the support of First Steps.

My daughter was premature and without First Steps I would have been so worried about her. They let me know that she was developing fine and was doing everything she should be and they let me know she was more advanced for a premature kid her age. Thank you for all your help and for answering all my questions. Thank you!

Please don't ever take this program away from these children. We would be lost without our therapists. They are truly part of my son's family and have helped him so very much. We have heard so many things about Governor Blunt wanting to get rid of this program and so forth. I really think he needs to look into this further. These children are awesome. They just need a little more help. Thank you!

Thank you.

Our service coordinator was terrific. She was very responsible in addressing all our needs. We were very pleased with every aspect of the program. It was a little difficult to get into contact with First Steps initially (we didn't have the phone number and couldn't find it listed in the phone book). Maybe they could advertise services more obviously.

I am extremely pleased with both our service coordinator and our service provider. My child receives physical therapy twice a month and I truly see a difference in her progress with all the extra work. I feel I have been given the tools to help my child. Until First Steps, I was extremely concerned about my child's development and felt somewhat helpless on how to go about getting the assistance she needed. First Steps has helped our family be proactive in my child's health and well-being. I now actively participate in continuing her therapy at home. Her progress is nothing short of miraculous in our eyes. We are very happy with the First Steps program.

lease do not change the First Steps program as was recently discussed in a First Steps conference. Having a developmental occupational therapist to come in once a week is not sufficient for our children with special needs. Our children need their therapists and their therapy. Occupational therapy cannot do the job of a speech, occupational, physical therapist, etc. Governor Blunt needs to start pretending (at least) to care for our disabled children. Pouring money into Parents As Teachers is not equivalent to helping our children with special needs. If Governor Blunt changes First Steps, there will certainly be a change in Governors at the next election. Thank you.

Thanks to the First Steps program our son is walking, talking, jumping, exploring, and doing many more extraordinary things, despite his vision impairment. We could not have afforded services on our own, and I could not have taught him everything he has learned by myself. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

It's a great program. Thank you.

To Whom This May Concern: My daughter has been in First Steps for a little over a year. Thanks for everything. You and my occupational therapist have done wonders for my daughter. Thanks again.

Right now, we do not have a service coordinator and I don't know when we will get one. I haven't heard anything about it. The last service coordinator left in March.

The First Steps program has been a huge blessing for our whole family. The program and all its therapists have expanded all of our daughter's skills. She has gotten stronger and stronger every day and we are cheering her on in every way. It is so nice to know that there are a team of loving people doing the same. I don't know where my daughter would be if it weren't for First Steps, but I am certain it would not be here. Thank you for supporting our daughter and for being sensitive to where we are as a family. I sincerely don't know if we could have done it without you.

I love my speech therapist and so does my child.

Great program. Thank you.

We had a great coordinator who helped our daughter get what she needed.

I would like to suggest that First Steps service coordinators take more time with new families entering the program. I think it would be beneficial for the service coordinator and parent(s) to go through any initial reports, testings and/or evaluations and make a checklist of all services recommended to ensure all the child's needs are addressed; then a plan developed for the parents as to where each of those needs can be met with First Steps providers and/or a "to do" list created for both parties if providers are a problem in their area. There should then be a follow-up meeting, call and/or email contact until a provider is found for each needed service and the child is fully set up to receive those services. For instance, my daughter should have started occupational therapy services when she started speech therapy services based on her initial evaluation report. However, this service was not discussed, nor services offered in my initial meeting with our service coordinator, or any contact thereafter. My child's speech therapist inquired one day as to what other services she was receiving. When I replied, "none", she inquired about occupational therapy as was recommended in the initial report evaluation as she had a copy of the report. Bottom line~the speech therapist contacted my service coordinator and within one to two weeks occupational therapy was approved and started. She almost fell through the cracks.

I think First Steps has made my son improve so much thanks to all of you.

My husband and I would highly recommend our providers. Both were very knowledgeable, helpful and supportive of our son's needs and our family.

My son's service coordinator has been a very understanding and helpful person. She was the first person who seemed to understand some of the challenges and issues my child was feeling - articulating back to me an approach that made sense for both me and my son (therapy program). His physical therapist is outstanding. She has a very calm and soothing approach and is always prepared and thinking of new ways to address my child's therapy needs. Outside of day-to-day activities, she has also personally followed up on doctor's appointments and suggested classes that address my child's needs. She has been instrumental in my son's progress and I would highly recommend her to any First Steps family. I am very grateful to First Steps. Without it, my son may have slipped through the cracks, as he is not significantly delayed, but was clearly in need of some physical and occupational therapy services. Thank you.

First Steps therapists need to be more organized and keep their appointments and not make the parents wonder every week whether their child will have a session or not.

First Steps is a wonderful program which has helped our family deal with our daughter's prematurity, and it has taught us ways to help her develop like her peers.

Train service coordinator to be a BETTER coordinator.

I have recently moved out of state, but I really was thankful that I found First Steps. P.S. My son is in the same program here, just a different name. He is talking more and really becoming who we know he could be. Thank you.

Our service coordinator has helped us a great deal with everything and has always been very pleasant and friendly at all of our meetings.

My new service coordinator is wonderful! She always returns my calls promptly and if she does not have an answer for me immediately, I can expect a call that day with it. The therapists are so fabulous and have great ideas. They are always enthused and never talk down. Thank you for your wonderful programs.

Being a new parent with a son with needs, the First Steps Program has allowed me to provide the necessary tools for him. I have watched my son grow and develop over the months. I do look forward to receiving additional resources available so that he can be even more productive. I am grateful for the service. I thank you.

We have an awesome service provider. She is encouraging and very personable. My children love her.

I know all children with challenges grow at different rates, but with mine, I do appreciate the First Steps program services but sometimes, well most of the time, I feel it's more evaluation than therapy which I greatly appreciate. But, at the same time, it can be a bit pricey for an evaluation. I wish First Steps had another way for parents with children with challenges to have their advice without the cost for therapy. I'm not putting First Steps down in any way, it's just that in my case I pay monthly for advice and I'm only sharing this for your program so that you may see that there are families who do appreciate the therapists but wish you had someone who just did evaluations monthly so the therapists could help kids who really need therapy. I enjoy the evaluations but I feel that's what I need for my son. I guess I'm lucky that way. I'm frustrated with this part of your program.

The vast majority of our providers were/are exceptional, which made the two that were probably fine seem incompetent. Our coordinator is excellent. She does everything that needs to be done before you can give it a second thought.

Our service provider is awesome! She needs to be a role model when you have new hires on board. Not only is she skilled in early childhood development; her demeanor is perfect. Children appreciate knowing limits~she expects to expand our child's potential and continually works toward goals she sees he is capable of.

My son's speech therapist (for about a year now) is a wonderful teacher - extremely knowledgeable in her field as well as in related areas. She volunteered her time and efforts when my son was diagnosed with PDD. Her help and genuine concern for my child's well-being is/was greatly appreciated. I have been very happy and thankful to all the First Steps employees. My son's doing great thanks to them.

First Steps has been very helpful with our family in dealing with having 2 premature infants.

I feel like they get kind of personal and I don't like that. I feel he needs more than just me and the two people who work with us. Thank you.

We could have met more with the service coordinator every three months to talk about what each therapists was working.

If we did not have the service of First Steps, our child would not be able to reach many of her developmental goals. We are thankful for these services.

I feel that without First Steps, my daughter and I would be lost! We appreciate everything we have learned! You have wonderful people working for you! We are very thankful for that!! Sincerely,

I am completely convinced that without the assistance of both occupational and physical therapy provided, my son would not have progressed as successfully as he did. When he came home from being in the NICU for five months, he was on two feeding tubes, receiving seven different medications (23 daily doses), eight shots, being heel stuck every two hours for low blood sugar, required oxygen and was on two monitors. He was unable to swallow and was startled by human contact and sounds. He has had six surgeries in two years. Today, he is a happy, healthy boy with minimal physical delays and moderate speech delays. I am convinced that within the next year those will be behind us as well. I will be forever grateful for the support that First Steps was able to provide my son and family. The only frustration I ever experienced was during service coordinator meetings we set new goals. Expressing every diagnosed outcome in terms of how it would positively impact the quality of my family was painstaking. Example: My goal - child to sit on floor with legs in V. Must be said: "For older son to be able to play together with child on floor he needs to improve ability to sit with legs in V." I often felt if I couldn't express it correctly his services would be cut despite everyone's knowledge of his needs.

I am very pleased with this program. Our coordinator and therapists have been very helpful and helped educate us as well as our child. We feel better equipped to work with our child thanks to the advice they have shown and given to us. Thank you First Steps! Our child has benefited greatly from your program.

First Steps has been a wonderful program for my child. Everyone has been more than helpful and very nice. I wish the program would continue on past three years of age. I'm very thankful for the time they have helped my son. Mrs. Brooks and Andrew

The service coordinator and service providers have helped us so much over the course of our services. I would highly recommend all of them. We have made enormous improvements with all aspects of therapy and my outlook for my son is vastly improved, especially over the last year.

We do not think that some of the rules are in the best interest of family and child. For example, our occupational therapist wanted to bring in a consultant and it was not allowed under the plan. Then, when we wanted to "try" another occupational therapist, we were not allowed to switch without removing our primary occupational therapist.

My wife and I are both pediatricians. We have found the process to be cumbersome and redundant. Our child has Down Syndrome and started services immediately due to our forceful call to action. Meetings with our coordinator are painful because the "justifications for services" are ridiculous. Our child has Down Syndrome! He will be delayed all his life. My wife and I know the system and sometimes we still have to "push" to get things done. First Steps is set up to help those with the loudest voice, the greatest knowledge. It is passive, reactive...NOT aggressive and proactive. When asked what our goals were for our son, having a clear knowledge of normal developmental milestones, we went down the line of "normal milestones". The coordinator's response was, you need to be less technical". We are doctors. That is how we understand development. Again, my biggest concern is that the system is TOO reactive and not proactive...it shows a bias towards well educated and aggressive types of families. These children ALL deserve more and we should expect more from them than previously thought.

I am very happy with my First Steps providers at this time (occupational and speech). I did have to change speech therapists because the previous one was never prepared nor had a plan for my child. She was an independent therapist. I am now using one who belongs to United Services and appreciate her accountability.

I am having an awful time getting my transportation plan or form to fill out to be reimbursed for traveling back and forth for services. I also am having a hard time getting my coordinator to understand that I don't want my children's time decreased just because there are two children instead of one. The services have been very beneficial to my children even though it has only been in place for four months. They have made great improvements.

We very much appreciate the First Steps program and the way that it has connected us to the therapists that are doing amazing work with our daughter. However, we have been extremely frustrated with the three service coordinators that we have worked with in the year that we have been in the program. They all seem overworked and frazzled and even if they wanted to spend more time or attention on our daughter, they couldn't. The slowness and poor response time has compelled us to do things on our own several times so service weren't delayed. (e.g., our daughter needed orthopedic braces and we felt it was important enough to go through our own resources and insurance rather than wait for the program and service coordinator. Also, since we have had so many service coordinators working with our family, none of them have gotten to know us or our daughter and I am always re-explaining my daughter's history to a new person on the phone. This is very frustrating.

My family is very happy with the First Steps program. Me and my family thank you.

We are very happy and thankful for the services provided.

Meeting on May 8, 2007, I left the office after the meeting confused and did not understand where my child stands.

Thank you! First Steps has changed the life of my son. We believe this early therapy has changed the direction in which he could have gone. A MILLION thanks!

We had been receiving therapy service for six months before I learned about First Steps. I wish our pediatrician or therapist had told us sooner.

Our county has limited occupational and speech providers.

We found the initial planning process to be frustrating. Our service coordinator kept asking what our priorities and goals were for our child. But since this is our first child, we are not very knowledgeable about developmental milestones for babies (with or without special needs). The First Steps staff should proactively share their expertise and help parents understand what goals and therapies are appropriate; instead, we had to play "20 questions" with our service coordinator to get any information. We have been told that First Steps is a "parent-driven program", which sounds nice in theory but in reality makes things more difficult for parents.

I wanted to tell you just how much the First Steps program has helped our family. We have three adopted children from South Korea. We were first introduced to the First Steps program when our daughter came home to us with a cleft palate and was going to need speech services. We realized then what a valuable service it truly was when we were provided with a fabulous speech therapist as well as numerous resources to help our child be successful before school age. We were again referred to First Steps when our youngest child arrived home with delays due to a genetic disorder. He is currently receiving OT, PT and speech services through First Steps. We knew that god led us to these children and with First Steps it has been possible to give both of these children every chance to be successful in their young lives. The support and resources that First Steps has provided has been incredible. We also couldn't possibly afford all the services provided to help our children. We feel this is an incredible program that needs to continue in order to help other children like ours be successful. Thank you for your continued efforts to help children and families in need. When you have a child diagnosed with a special need, it helps to know that there are people and services that are specially designed to help you when needed. We are so grateful for this program.

The First Steps services have been very informative and helpful to us in getting our son back to his age appropriate levels. He has made great progress these last few weeks.

First Steps takes enough pressure of families to make it as a family. Without this support families stress to the point of breaking up.

I do not believe the program is well publized. Had it not been for my Parents As Teachers educator and knowing someone who had heard of this program, we would not be where we are today. This program has been a huge help to our family and our therapists are terrific. I definitely feel some service coordinators need to be educated about various types of therapies - especially ABA. Our original coordinator was not very familiar with this type of therapy and seemed to allow her own personal beliefs and some negative sereotyped information sway her approval of our referral for ABA-even though our therapists were all on board. I think it is imperative for the coordinators to be knowledgeable in the types of therapy offered (and how they help the child - the purpose) through First Steps in order to better serve their families. Thank you for all you do. The program truly is a godsend to many families.

She was the first person I spoke with at First Steps. Without her continuous help we would not be where we are today. Thank you First Steps.

My son has Down Snyderome. First Steps has been wonderful. I don't know how well he would be doing if it weren't for the wonderful services we receive through First Steps.

My child received all the help that First Steps could offer. I believe she also has needs not covered by First Steps and therefore, private therapy is necessary.

Thank you all for your help.

I wish we (parent) didn't have to choose the service provider (ie., PT) from a website. I wish the coordinator had more knowledge of the providers personally so she could guide us toward a service provider that fit our individual child's needs and personality. With that said, we love our physical therapist and we couldn't ask for better care for our daughter. Our physical therapist, Paula, is exceptional and we feel she is the best person to be giving our daughter all the special attention she needs. I can't thank you enough for giving us the opportunity to address our daughters special needs.

The First Steps program has been a lifesaver to Drew and our family as a whole. If First Steps didn't haelp financially and coordinate services for him, we could not afford to get him the help he needs nor would I be able to work full time to help support the family. Having worked for the state of Missouri in the past, I have witnessed first hand many ineffective programs. First Steps is very effective and a necessary service to the community. I for one am happy to pay taxes on programs such as this which will help children become productive members of our community.

My son's occupational therapist has helped him tremendously.

We are so happy with the services we have received through First Steps for our son! Our service coordinator goes above and beyond to help us access appropriate services. She is also very supportive and able to guide my family towards answers to our concerns and questions.

Thank you to our service coordinator. She really made us feel that no question was silly and walked us through every step of this process. We really appreciate her support and are confident our son will continue to receive the services that our First Steps therapists have begun to instill in our daily lives. Thank you.

We have recently changed service coordinators and hope things will get even better for us.

For the questions with an asterisk:

This did not apply to all service providers, but most of them.

Our service coordinator is always very helpful and gets things complete in a timely manner.

My child needs more speech therapy and it is authorized but there is no one available for the second day of therapy. We are working to resolve this.

First Steps has helped my son so much! Not only him, by myself as well. I am learning along with him and I couldn't have a better "team" on my side. I am so grateful for this service. I don't know what I would have done without the help. Thank you.

It would be helpful for First Steps to assist children with medical needs and/or rare and unusual birth defects. Also, assist with medical needs, developmental needs and provide for nursing when necessary

We had several differing views from our first service coordinator. We have since changed service coordinators and we feel she is truly working for the best interest of our child.

Please continue to spread the word about the First Steps program to ensure that families in need of its services are aware of the program. St. Louis Children's Hospital and St. John's Mercy Medical Center staff were excellent at making our family aware of the program and encouraged us to set up on evaluation before leaving the hospital. We highly recommend this approach. As first time parents, not to mention that we are also dealing with a disabled child for the first time, we did not realize the extent our child would need services or the unexpected health issues that were in our son's future. I don't believe our son's pediatrician was aware of the program, so without the hospital stays we might have been unaware of this incredible program. This program has provided invaluable services to my son. His therapists and dietician are outstanding. Also, the home-based services are a necessity for my son and would not have been covered by our group health plan. His doctors have considered him housebound since birth but he doesn't meet the group health plan's guidelines for home-based services. His specialists and I can confidently say that he would not be meeting developmental milestones or as healthy as he is without this program. Thank you First Steps! We can't imagine what our lives would have been like without you!

I feel that families of children who are severely disabled should get more respite care. Also, I feel the state should allow very severe children to remain in the program until at least five years of age. Otherwise, First Steps has been so wonderful to us and we are so sad and are not ready to leave the program when my child turns three. Mentally, he is only about three months old.

First Steps is a great program that has helped my daughter and my family tremendously. The program should be expanded to focus more on helping an increased number of families specifically in at risk areas with single-parent high-need families.

Therapists should be given tools to help others focus solely on the child during the therapy session. We've had several problems with our nurse "socializing" with the therapist and I felt like during those times, he didn't receive therapy.

I really like my speech therapist.

My first coordinator was Amy Roberts and she was wonderful to work with. She promptly got our services started and made sure we were satisfied. My hope is that our new coordinator is just as pleasant and thorough.

I know resources are sometimes scarce, but I would have liked to have known about First Steps before my son turned one. It would be nice to have more information available at the hospital or pediatrician's office. My son was born with Cleft Lip and Palate and would have been an obvious referral to First Steps. We live in Springfield and it wasn't until we attended my son's first annual Cleft Team visit in St. Louis (Children's Hospital) at age one that we first heard of First Steps. More needs to be done to get the word out.

We had to switch service coordinators, but once we did, everything went well. First Steps has been a miracle for our family. Our child now has a future because of the early intervention and education we've received. Thank you! I only hope our transition to the school district goes as well. We've already had to hire a lawyer. I think health insurance companies are getting off way to easy and our law makers should do something about it.

Our providers have been wonderful for my daughter and my family. Thank you! If there are any more questions, you may contact us.

Having trouble getting service coordinator to call me back. We would like to the service coordinator come once a month like she is supposed to.

First Steps has been wonderful in helping my son progress in development. He receives speech and occupational services weekly and has been steadily progressing week by week. Our family wouldn't be able to afford these services without First Steps and my son wouldn't be able to get the help he desperately needs. I am so grateful for First Steps, our service coordinator who is wonderful and to our speech therapist, occupational therapist, all of which do such excellent work with my son! Thank you again for this amazing program.

ABA should be more available. How do I get my child RDI?

My speech therapist has not been very effective. She cancels all the time and is not working on any letter sounds with my son. Either he can say the word or not to her. Where I feel if she would work on the sounds he would be able to say the words he is having difficulty with.

We are probably receiving more services than we really need. Our service coordinator is very helpful, but she tends to run behind on evaluations.

All of the service care providers that I have spoke with have all been very friendly and have been knowledgeable about the needs my child has. In the beginning, I was amazed at how quickly First Steps coordinators contacted us after my daughter's birth. It truly helped ease our thoughts and fears about the next step to assisting my daughter's needs. Although my daughter has developed age appropriately, the First Step coordinators have always touched base with me, leaving the door open if and when we need anything.

We feel so fortunate to be included in First Steps. I feel completely comfortable with our coordinator and all of the therapists involved in my child's care.

I feel that First Steps is a wonderful program. My only concern is that we were told that First Steps could not justify some things for my daughter since she wasn't going to be in the program very long. I don't think that the length of time should have anything to do with it. We couldn't help she got diagnosed when First Steps would only have her for a few months. I think that only the need should be in question. If they need it then they should get it. Not, "I'm sorry she isn't in the program long enough to justify that."

We have an excellent physical therapist. She has always had our daughter's best interest at heart.

Our son really needs an occupational therapist. I know she is busy but if he is not available through your services, where can we get him one?

Mom is a First Steps provider and knows all the therapists personally. My views are a little skewed.

To Whom It May Concern:

I want to thank you for all your help. My son was adopted and I knew he had problems, but my pediatrician just blew it off. My daughter, who works in a daycare setting, told me about First Steps. I was very overwhelmed when they diagnosed him with mild Autism. My service coordinator helped me in so many ways. She really got me through this and made me feel that there is help out there. I wish I had a video camera when we started to see how, in six months, he is a totally different child. We started when he was eighteen months. I can't thank you and all the therapists enough. Shel was there every time I needed her.

First Steps is an amazing program. Unfortunately, my first service coordinator was not helpful in getting appropriate necessary services for my daughter. I had to do most legwork myself (scheduling evaluations, calling therapists) in order for services to happen quickly. Now that services are up and running, things are going smoothly and the program has helped my daughter immensely. She is reaching developmental milestones and our whole family is learning along the way. I have recently switched coordinators so I hope my new coordinator is more organized and works in a timely manner.

Thank you First Steps. I am very fortunate to live in a state that provides great services for special needs children. The Children's Learning Center in Camdenton is awesome. All of the therapists are first rate. Thank you again.

The First Steps program has been wonderful for our son and our family. The therapists as well as the service coordinator have been extremely helpful in our son's development. I especially want to recognize one of the therapists for her work in the pool to help develop core strength and get our son walking. I also appreciate that our service coordinator is always available to talk or ask questions. She really helps provide the best for our son.

I, personally, cannot brag on service coordinator enough. She has been the BEST! I feel like even though my daughter is going to be out of the program, we have made a friend for life. She is definitely good at what she does and has empowered our family to get the help my daughter needed.

My service coordinator has been with my children for several years. She is outstanding at her job. She goes out of her way to make sure her families have access to the necessary services First Steps has to provide. She is truly one in a million and our family has been blessed to have her in our corner through the stressful, worrisome, and happy times over the years.

When my son was first evaluated by the physical therapist she felt he didn't need any therapy at that time, even though at ten months of age he couldn't even roll over. I was told that if he wasn't able to roll over by twelve months that he would need therapy then. My son rolled over for the first time at eleven months, but I still pushed for physical therapy. Therapy began within a few weeks of my request. At his initial evaluation I should have pushed for physical therapy since my son has Spina Bifida, but being new to First Steps, I didn't know how to advocate for services I felt that my son required. Now that he has had a wonderful physical therapist for over a year, he has progressed to walking with braces and a walker.

We are so blessed by our therapists. I only wish everyone who needs this program can obtain all the services they need as we do in the Jasper county area. Our therapists are wonderful people and very knowledgeable and they care about what happens to my child.

My only problem was the turnover of coordinators and communication between new people.

Thank you for the wonderful program. It has helped our child beyond our hopes and dreams. Great job!

My child could not be understood until he started First Steps. Although he doesn't speak very clearly, he has learned to sign with me to share his wants and needs now. I'm so happy to have First Steps in our lives. Thank you.

Our family would just like to personally thank our service coordinator for her help, guidance, and genuine concern for our family, but most of all for our son. She has treated us with the utmost respect and took as much time needed to explain all options available for our son. Most of all, we are so impressed with his therapist. Her patience, tenacity and all around loving care she gives to our son is unbelievable. She is not only a wonderful, upbeat person, but most importantly, she is a very knowledgeable therapist. Words cannot express our gratitude to First Steps. Thank you so much.

Our service coordinator in Pettis County was great. Our service coordinator in Johnson County is incompetent and not helpful in any way.

My daughter's service providers are extremely helpful. If it weren't for them, my daughter would still be lying on her back unable to move. They explained the therapy "tricks" very clearly and my daughter loves all of them. Even though she is still having problems, I am confident that she will overcome her delays and most of her disabilities.

I am grateful for the services we receive through First Steps. I also have high regard for our coordinator who has been very helpful to us. However, I am disappointed in the written progress notes I have received, or I should really say, lack thereof. I have now learned that it is expected that therapists submit regular progress notes through the online system and that parents receive copies. One of our therapists, who resigned from our case in March, has not submitted progress notes since August of last year. I find it unacceptable that she has continued to be paid when she had not been completing these required reports. I had never received a report from her in the whole year of weekly therapy she provided for our son. We are now in the position of selecting a new therapist who does not have access to any information about progress in that specific therapy area because of this lack of reporting. I believe this could be prevented in the future if your organization requires that reports be submitted before therapists receive full payment. Otherwise, there's no way to hold them ultimately accountable. Thank you for this opportunity to provide feedback. I hope change will occur.

Just be sure that all clients know about all benefits. The client analyst should know all information and if they don't, they have other resources to direct you to the correct information. P.S. There should be a person that goes behind the service coordinator and makes sure there is not room for error.

I think that the First Steps program is a valuable program that benefits my family and many other families. I think you are missing the boat though by requiring 50% total delays in motor language. My son qualified because a professional was willing to speak up about her professional opinion and qualify him even though he was age appropriate in fine motor and 50% delayed in gross. Because of these unprofessional and unfounded practices, many children will miss out on valuable early intervention services. Anyone in education and child development knows that early intervention is a key to success. The First Steps program is missing the boat and needs to really reconsider their practices and if it is really best practice.

Commented negatively for questions five and eight because my son did not qualify for services at twenty months, even though he had a speech regression and the evaluator never mentioned that being a sign of Autism which he was later diagnosed with.

This is a useless program. I have not been helped at all.

Our provider was outstanding. Wonderful support in a very difficult time. We couldn't have ask for better.

Question 27: "Our child is better off because of the First Steps program". Finally after she got what she needed. I felt like First Steps providers did not want to work with my child. Only because of some of them, I had to drive a good hour and a half out to where we live. We are out in a rural area and I felt they didn't want to "mess with us" or take my concerns seriously. I finally started driving an hour and a half each way every week to get my child's falling behind addressed! It was then, after three weeks of this, that First Steps, after being contacted by my primary care physician and the physical and occupational therapists, did they take my concerns seriously. I was also originally told that my child did not qualify for services of physical and occupational therapy. After researching on the Internet and speaking with our social worker at the hospital, I found out she qualified and met three of the four criteria! Now we are receiving the services we needed all along. But only after a lot of headache, tears and seeing my child falling further and further behind. How is all of this justified? First Steps needs some major revamping and needs to be made more parent-friendly if it is to survive in Missouri.

We know our daughter would not be doing as well as she is without the services she receives from First Steps. We are huge supporters of this wonderful program.

First Steps is doing very good with my child.

Without First Steps, my daughter wouldn't have improved or made it as far as she has.

Thank God for this program. Our daughter was diagnosed with D. S. at birth. First Steps was and has been supportive and there for us since the beginning. My daughter will be the best she can be with the assistance of this wonderful program. I feel like a better parent being able to give my daughter the extra support where she needs it. I don't feel helpless. Thank you. P.S. Our care coordinator has been beyond amazing for her care, support, guidance and professionalism. She represents First Steps beautifully.

Our daughter has wonderful therapists. We are so lucky to have a physical, occupational and a speech therapist who all are professional and want the very best for her. Our service coordinator is also professional, resourceful and available to help when needed. Thank you.

I appreciate very much the service we receive through First Steps. But, I would like to state that accessing First Steps was not as easy as it should be. Also, I'm sure I received information about our "rights" and "procedural safeguards", but I was so overwhelmed initially that I do not recall the information. Maybe that is something that could be addressed a second time after the family has begun to adjust to its new direction. Just some thoughts...thank you for your assistance.

You should add a, "somewhat agree" to survey choices.

I agree with this survey. However, I am a First Steps provider so this information could be skewed as far as learning about First Steps and obtaining services for my family.

Thank you for providing care for my children so that they can be mainstreamed.

Service coordinator never met out expectations.

We haven't seen anyone in a while. I have been trying to get a hold of my child's person but have not been successful. I hope we will get someone out to see my child soon.

They have been very helpful to our family especially to have my child perform his duties of daily living in his full potential. Thanks for having First Steps part of my own family in bringing out my child's full potential. We do hope you continue helping other families who really need help.

We are so grateful for this program. Thank you. First Steps has made a wonderful difference in our lives.

Me and my coordinator need to be more informed and educated. Things need to be met in a more timely manner. Cancellations need to be made up. This program needs to continue past school age transition and enforce the same needed special services to be given at school. If not, it needs to be continued by First Steps.

For my child who is two, he benefits much more from going out into the community for his services for socialization.

The only problem I have is trying to understand the IFSP because it not only has current goals listed, but also goals that have already been met.

They teach me to assist my child. I have always been confident of my skills as a parent, even without First Steps. First Steps had nothing to do with my ability to work with professionals. First Steps is a part of the big picture of learning about my child's needs, but not the entire picture.

Our providers are wonderful. My only comment is that the paperwork we receive seems double. We receive a statement of benefits/treatment received and a bill. Could this be combined into one? I have plenty of paperwork and would like to harm fewer trees. Thank you.

Wonderful program! I can not say enough about how the program changed our family. Thanks!

Our physical therapist transferred service to the state and we haven't heard anything. The website is awful. Please fix it so we can find information and request services.

Without First Steps my child would be lost. I owe everything to First Steps people and programs they have offered. Thank you so much.

Our son is walking and doing great. We felt he no longer needed the First Steps program, so we have discontinued. Thank you.

She has been the best and I consider her a V.I.P. in my son's life.

Billing for services lags too far behind. Too much turnover of First Steps coordinators. No continuity. Can't even spell my son's name correctly! Do they really know the people they are servicing (not service provider but First Steps personnel)?

Need to get service coordinators that want to do their jobs and not just draw a pay check and get rid of some overhead and shorten the paperwork so everyone can do therapies and get services and equipment to patients.

On the onset of our child's illness and following developmental delays, our intake coordinator was fairly uncooperative and it took a long time to get services started. However, our service coordinator has been very helpful.

Thank you for your services.

First Steps is a wonderful program and I admire the dedication. My son loves the services he receives and is a much happier child now. Thank you. It really helps his communication with his sister.

Thank you for allowing my child to receive physical therapy at an early childhood development center instead of only at home. The equipment and therapists are excellent. Thank you also for covering the cost of making and having splints for my child's feet.

We have had an excellent experience with First Steps and our coordinator. She and our service providers helped to put me at ease and to effectively address my child's needs. I can't say enough about our excellent experience with First Steps! I also feel that partial payment system is excellent! Thank you so very much.

My child easily qualified for First Steps because he had a defined medical diagnosis. I am told that other children do not qualify as easily if they simply have a developmental delay with no actual diagnosis. All of the service providers treat my child (and me) with respect. I try to be flexible so as to accommodate my providers and their schedules. Also, I strive to keep the same providers so that my child has "consistency" and routine. I did run into a problem with the number and availability of physical therapists. There seems to be a huge shortage of providers of physical therapy services. This is a definite problem. I choose to drive my child to a physical therapist - it is a small inconvenience to me since the other three providers I use do come to my home. The co-pay/billing system instituted last year seems to be working just fine for our family. Thank you.

Question #24: First Steps had nothing to do with my ability to work with professionals.

I truly have been disappointed in the service coordinators assigned to us. The first one has never had contact with us and the second one is so overwhelmed with her caseload that I have had to contact her to schedule our IFSP meeting. I am not asking for much - just a simply call once a month just to check in and see if we need anything. I am even okay if they leave a message. As for the therapists, I couldn't be more thrilled! We truly have been blessed.

Therapists - Weekly service coordinators contacts with monthly.

Our service coordinator has been a tremendous help. My daughter is hearing impaired and she has been able to answer questions and be supportive. She has been through it herself with her own son. Everything I have talked to her about (concerns, problems, etc.), she has followed through on right away. I really appreciate everything she has done for us.

I believe my daughter would not be as progressed as she is if it wasn't for First Steps. All of her therapists are excellent and care deeply for my baby. I am so very grateful to all of them!

Our service coordinator was amazing - we were so lucky to have her as our coordinator. She was always very thorough, efficient and very nice. We love her.

First Steps is so awesome. After you finally qualify for services. They should definitely be applicable to children with one minimum delay; not multiples. I understand this is Blunt's fault and plan to campaign heavily against him.

This survey simply was not enough for me to extend my gratitude for all the help I have received from First Steps. You see, we are a foster family and in September we had a fifteen-month-old baby girl along with her four-year-old brother placed with us. The baby was definitely delayed and my pediatrician recommended a complete evaluation for services and the nearest place aside from First Steps was in Cape Girardeau, an hour-and-a-half away from our home and during my work hours. I was frantic with how to help this child. First Steps came to our rescue. The ladies evaluated and recommended therapies in five areas. Each of the therapists work with her at daycare or my mother's home during the day. I meet with them occasionally at home, either taking off work, or they come after work hours. They recommend things for us to work on at home and keep a watchful eye on any new issues. At the time she came into our home she could not sit up by herself, now she can talk, walk and interact with siblings. She has a personality. Her therapists cheer her on and find techniques that work for her. They encourage her and us as a family. We are so thankful for this service and especially to these women; they go above and beyond what their jobs entail. I consider this program a wonderful resource and recommend them to anyone needing the care they can provide.

Question #17: We like our speech therapist. However, she doesn't have any feeding experience with kids trying to get off of feeding tubes and so that's a little disappointing, but there are no speech therapists available in our area. We really like our service coordinator. She is friendly, compassionate and very supportive. She encourages us and also is very knowledgeable about her job and the Missouri First Steps program. We are very satisfied with her and recommend her highly.

It took me two months to get a physical therapist and one month to get a speech therapist after it was determined that she needed one. That put her further behind in development. Sometimes I feel they try to talk me out of services I feel my daughter needs just to go through the process a little later to get the therapist. During evaluations a speech therapist needs to actually feed the child instead of just asking questions because my daughter had a silent problem that I didn't know about until I actually got a speech therapist that fed her and figured it out. I could have been helping my daughter for six months! During evaluations it seems they ask us questions that we feel they should be answering for us. If we knew the answers we wouldn't need therapists. We don't know how delayed she is compared to a typical child or how often she needs certain therapies. We aren't the experts and will do whatever the professionals think is necessary. We want their opinions. I do think First Steps is a terrific organization and I don't know what I'd do without it. It just has a few kinks in it as most programs do. I am learning more about advocating for my daughter as I go. I talk to my coordinator all the time and she always returns my calls no matter how much of a nuisance I am. She has been very available to me. I'm learning how to get the services I want to better my child's chances in life.

The only concern I have is that we don't have any occupational, physical or speech therapists that come to our area. I am fortunate enough to be able to drive my daughter to her needed therapies, but others may be unable to do so. I know my service provider is trying, but is unable to find therapists to come to our town. Please help her! She works hard and has helped us so much but she can't do it alone. Thanks.

I didn't appreciate when one of the therapists said that my child may have caused her to have a miscarriage because of what caused his condition. It was out of his system before he was born. The only thing left was the anti-bodies. Also, three people had been pregnant around him and were not affected at all! Yet, she said she could no longer give us her services. Also, you may suggest putting someone's child on drugs, but don't look down upon them when they say no. There are reasons for the decision and the parents will speak for the child. The only way I know that anyone would understand is if they put their own child on that medication. Other than that, thank you for your services.

Thank God for First Steps.

Our son was diagnosed with Autism at age two. The neurologist who diagnosed him told us about the First Steps program. We have been incredibly happy with the program and with our son's progress. We have only had a couple of frustrations with the program. The first was that our intake coordinator asked us if our son had any fine motor delays/concerns. We said, "No", and so he did not receive an occupational therapist evaluation. Later, during the developmental therapy evaluation, it was determined that our son had a lot of sensory needs and would need occupational therapy (everyone at the IFSP agreed). Unfortunately, our son did not receive an occupational evaluation and so the occupational therapist that began working with him had a hard time determining his needs at first. Secondly, at our first IFSP meeting, my husband and I expressed great interest in ABA therapy for our son, but no one at the meeting would tell us how to get started with ABA. We later found out we just needed to request an evaluation, which we did. If we had known what to do, he could have begun ABA a month or so sooner. Also, no one from First Steps told us about the Judevine Parent Training program. We had to figure it out for ourselves. Both the Judevine Parent training and the ABA therapy have been invaluable to us and have greatly helped our son (along with speech, occupational and developmental therapy). I hope that intensive ABA programs will continue to be offered to children with Autism. I also hope that First Steps will continue to pay mileage and offer other incentives for implementers to attract and retain implementers. At first, it was difficult for us to find enough implementers. Thank you for the First Steps program.

Our First Steps coordinator has been wonderful for our family. Our First Steps team members are all the best in their specialties. Our family has been blessed to participate in First Steps and to get to know each member of our team. It will be hard to say "goodbye" in October, 2007. Thank you.